

I stand before you today as a retired schoolteacher of 30 years from the Helena School District. In the last years of my teaching I had to work under a bullying program and in my opinion the bullying program was bullying itself. It set students apart and intimidated everyone.

Let me tell you how it worked. Every morning a different student read the bullying pledge and read the names of students who had turned in their signed statements. Students who signed had their names placed on the wall outside the principles office on a star. Students who had not signed felt ignored and pressured to sign up. Then there was the bullying committee. They met at noon on Fridays and I happened to be in library one day while this was happening. The school counselor leading the group was having students go around one by one and say how they felt about a student who was not there. This shocked me because as a teacher I can tell you that you never single out a student like this, ever. The students were saying things like "he makes me feel disrespected", and "he's not trustworthy". I waited around because I was really curious about what dastardly thing this poor student had done. It turns out his offense was to decide he wanted to go to recess instead of being a part of their group!

The teachers were intimidated because they had a list of very subjective behaviors they were required to punish students for. They had to write down students' names, the date and what the punishment was. They had to turn this list in with their grade book at the end of the year to get paid. Some of the subjective behaviors we had to punish if reported were "not making eye contact", "making someone feel inferior", or "ignoring someone". Children very quickly realized if they were mad at someone they could easily report them for one of these behaviors and get them in trouble.

I actually go to the school board meetings and it seems that recently these programs are getting much worse. Under the new power program student's behaviors are tracked on the computer. Little kids can have a rap sheet by the time they are in second grade if they have a few conflicts with someone on the bus or playground. Worse-they're going for consistent behaviors so every teacher has to interpret every event the same way and punish the same way. Teachers are now going to report on each other under the new program where teachers evaluate each other.

This all sounds very Orwellian to me and I hope this committee will put a stop to it by not passing this bill.

Our schools do not allow violence between students and have playground assistants and rules. I would not want to live in a world where every movement and word is monitored and by the Office of Public Instruction that just, by the way, put a book in English classes here at Helena High that discusses masturbation. I do not believe you can trust their judgment.

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Against SB 141